

MS Bremen

Rating: ★★★★★

Size Ship:.....6,752 tons
Lifestyle:..... Premium
Cruise Line:..... Hapag-Lloyd Cruises
Former Names:..... *Frontier Spirit*
Builder:..... Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (Japan)
Original Cost:..... \$42 million
Entered Service:..... November 1990/November 1993
Registry:..... The Bahamas
Length (ft/m):..... 365.8/111.51
Beam (ft/m):..... 55.7/17.00
Draft (ft/m):..... 15.7/4.80
Propulsion/Propellers:..... diesel (4,855kW)/2
Iceclass:..... 1AS
Passenger Decks:..... 6
Total
Crew:.....100

Passengers (lower beds/all berths):.....164/184
Passenger Space Ratio (lower beds/all berths):.....41.1/36.6
Crew/Passenger Ratio (lower beds/all berths):.....1.7/1.9
Navigation Officers:.....European
Cabins (total):.....82 (80 cabins and 2 suites)
Size Range (sq. ft/m):.....174.3-322.9/16.2-30.0
Cabins (outside view):.....82
Cabins (interior/no view):.....0
Cabins (for one person):.....0
Cabins (with private balcony):.....18
Cabins (wheelchair accessible):.....2
Cabin Current:.....110 and 220 volts
Elevators:.....2
Casino:.....No
Slot Machine:.....No
Swimming Pools (outdoors):.....1
Swimming Pools (indoors):.....0
Whirlpools:.....0
Fitness Center:.....Yes
Sauna/Steam Room:.....Yes/No
Massage:.....No
Self-service Launderette:.....No
Lecture/Film Room:.....Yes (seats 164)
Library:.....Yes (open 24 hours)

Zodiacs:.....12
Helicopter Pad:.....Yes
Classification Society:.....Lloyd's Register

OVERALL SCORE 1,461 (OUT OF A POSSIBLE 2,000 POINTS)

BERLITZ'S RATINGS:

	Possible	Achieved
Ship	500	349
Accommodation	200	150
Food	400	298
Service	400	311
Entertainment	N/A	N/A
Cruise	500	353

Accommodation: This comes in only four different configurations. All cabins have an outside view (the cabins on the lowest deck have portholes; all others have good-sized picture windows).

All of the cabins are well equipped for the size of the vessel. Each cabin features wood accenting, a color television (small), telephone, refrigerator (soft/drinks are provided and replenished daily, at no charge), vanity desk (with 110v American-style and 220v European-style electrical sockets) and sitting area with small drink tables. Cabins have either twin beds (convertible to a queen-sized bed, but with individual European duvets) or double bed, according to location. There is also a small indented area for outerwear and rubber boots, while a small drawer above the refrigerator unit provides warmth when needed for such things as wet socks and gloves.

Each cabin has a private bathroom (of the “me first, you next” variety) with a tiled floor, shower enclosure (with curtain), toiletries’ cupboard, washbasin (located quite low, as the ship was built in Japan) and low-height toilet (vacuum type, with delay), and a decent amount of under-sink storage space (there’s also an electrical socket for shavers). Large towels and 100 percent cotton bathrobes are provided for all passengers, as is a range of personal toiletry items (shampoo, body lotion, and shower gel, soap and shower cap).

Each cabin has a moderate amount of (illuminated) closet space (large enough for two weeks for two persons, but very tight for more than that cruise length) although the drawer space is limited (suitcases can be stored under the beds). The beds feature European cotton duvets. Some Sun Deck and Bridge Deck cabins also have a small balcony (the first expedition cruise vessel to have them) with blue plastic (easily cleanable) decking and wooden handrail, but no exterior light. The balconies, which have two teak chairs and drink tables, are, however, quite small and narrow, with part partitions and doors that open outwards onto the balcony.

Two Sun Deck suites have a separate lounge area with sofa and coffee table, bedroom (with large wall closet), large walk-in closet, and bathroom with a bathtub and two washbasins.

Dining: The dining room features open seating when operating for mixed German and International passenger cruises, and open seating for breakfast and lunch and one seating for dinner (with assigned seats) when operated only as German-speaking cruises. It is fairly attractive, with pleasing décor and colors; it also has big picture windows. The food is extremely good, and made with high-quality ingredients. Although the portions are small, the presentation is appealing to the eye. There is always an excellent choice of freshly made breads and pastries, and a good selection of cheeses and fruits. Dinner typically includes a choice of two appetizers, two soups, an entremets (in-between course), two entrees (main courses) and two or three desserts, plus a cheese board. There is always a vegetarian specialty, as well as a healthy (light) eating option. The service is also good, with smartly dressed bi-lingual (German and English speaking) waiters and waitresses.

As an alternative to the dining room, breakfast and luncheon buffets are available in “The Club” or outside on the Lido Deck (weather permitting), where “The Starboard Bar/Grill is also operated for hamburgers and other grilled food items.

Other Comments: This purpose-built expedition cruise vessel (formerly *Frontier Spirit*, for the now defunct US-based Frontier Cruises) has a handsome, wide, though squat, contemporary profile and decent equipment. Its wide beam provides decent stability and the vessel’s long cruising range and ice-hardened hull provides the ship with access to remote destinations. The ship carries the highest ice classification for passenger vessels. In 1993 Hapag-Lloyd spent \$2 million in refurbishment costs to reconfigure the restaurant and make other changes to the ship, and, in another refurbishment in 2000, the hull color was changed from blue to white. This is one of the few ships that will allow you to take a tour of the engine room. It is the sixth ship to bear the name *Bremen* for Hapag-Lloyd; the others being introduced in 1858 (*Bremen I*), 1897 (*Bremen II*), 1923 (*Bremen III*), 1929 (*Bremen IV*) and 1959 (*Bremen V*).

Zero-discharge of waste matter is fiercely practiced; this means that absolutely nothing is discharged into the ocean that does not meet with the international conventions on ocean pollution (MARPOL). All the equipment for in-depth marine and shore excursions is provided including a boot-washing station with three water hoses and boot cleaning brushes.

An open bridge policy applies. There is almost a wrap-around-walking deck (you must go up and down the steps at the front of the deck to complete the “wrap”). A large open deck aft of the mast provides a good viewing platform (also useful for sunbathing on warm-weather cruises). There is a small fitness room, and a decent sized sauna.

The ship has a good number of public rooms for its size, including a forward-facing observation lounge/lecture room (with portside bar), and a main lounge (called the Club) with a high ceiling, bandstand, dance floor and large bar, and an adjacent library with 12 bookcases (most books are in German).

Bremen features superb, well-planned destination-intensive itineraries with good documentation, port information and maps. The ship provides a good degree of comfort (although it is not as luxurious as the slightly larger sister ship *Hanseatic*). There is also a reception desk (open 24 hours a day), a fine array of expert lecturers, a friendly crew,

and no annoying “elevator” music played in the hallways or on the open decks all add to the enjoyable cruise experience you should have aboard this ship.

Bremen is a very comfortable, practical, and unpretentious expedition cruise vessel (perhaps arguably a better expedition vessel than sister ship *Hanseatic*, and, although not as luxurious in its interiors and appointments, the ship has a very loyal following).

Cruises aboard this ship will provide you with a fine learning and expedition experience, and operates particularly well when featuring Antarctic cruises (all shore landings and tours are included, as is seasickness medication). The onboard ambience is completely casual, comfortable, unstuffy (no tux needed), friendly, and very accommodating.

Passengers also appreciate the fact that there are no mindless parlour games, no television (on expedition cruises, although there are videos daily) no bingo, no horseracing, no casino, and no music in hallways or on open decks.

Arctic/Antarctic Cruises: When the ship goes to cold weather/ice areas such as the Arctic or Antarctic, red parkas (waterproof outdoor jackets) are supplied, as are waterproof rubber (Wellington) boots. You should, however, take some waterproof trousers and several pairs of thick socks, plus “thermal” underwear. Each of the fleet of 12 Zodiacs (rubber-inflatable landing craft) is named after a place: Amazon, Antarctic, Asmat, Bora Bora, Cape Horn, Deception, Jan Mayen, Luzon, Pitcairn, San Blas, Spitzbergen and Ushuaia. On Arctic and Antarctic cruises, it is particularly pleasing to go to the bridge wings late at night to stargaze under pollution free skies (the watch officers will be pleased to show you the night skies).

Note that special sailings may be under the auspices of various tour operators, although the ship is operated by Hapag-Lloyd Cruises. Thus, your fellow passengers (I prefer to refer to them as expedition cruise participants) may well be from many different countries. Insurance, port taxes and all staff gratuities are typically included in the cruise fare, and an expedition cruise logbook is also typically provided at the end of each expedition cruise for all participants – a superb reminder of what’s been seen and done during the course of your adventure experience. The onboard currency is the euro.

Weak Points: The ship does not have a “bulbous bow” and so is liable to deep pitching

in some sea conditions (it does, however, have stabilizers). The dining room has 12

pillars placed in inconvenient positions (the result of old shipbuilding techniques). The swimming pool is very small, as is the open deck space around it, although there are both shaded and open areas. In-cabin announcements cannot be turned off (on cruises in the Arctic and Antarctic, announcements are often made at or before 7am on days when shore landing are permitted). Sadly, the ship was not built with good cabin insulation, the result being that you can hear your neighbors brushing their hair.

Bathrooms are subject to gurgling plumbing noises (between the washbasin and shower enclosure) due to their design and construction. There is only one boot washing station (two would be better, and more in keeping with the requirements of an expedition cruise vessel).